

Foodservice Updates

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Minimize pricing pains

There's plenty of pressure on restaurant prices lately, whether from the increased competition for labor, shortages of key ingredients, or other demands. How have you responded? According to recent research from Fitch Ratings, pent-up demand and fiscal stimulus have driven a recovery in restaurant sales in recent months – and that has enabled restaurants to pass increasing costs on to customers. Plenty of businesses have needed to (think of the restaurants who specialize in chicken wings), but others have hesitated due to the strains of the pandemic on customers in the past year. Where is the line for your customers when it comes to food prices – and what might you do to help smooth it out? Start by analyzing your menu and identifying your most costly and difficult-to-source items. Where might a less expensive or easier-to-source item be substituted? In cases where you need to keep a more expensive item on the menu, where can you incrementally boost the price of another item to help make up for the higher cost? Also consider the demographics of your customer base. According to recent consumer research from RMS cited in Nation's Restaurant News,



most respondents said upticks in food costs, the minimum wage and safety precautions justify price increases at restaurants – with Baby Boomers being most receptive to higher menu prices. Finally, you could consider adding an overall service charge to each order – with a brief, carefully worded message on the menu explaining why you need to do it – and how it ensures your restaurant can sustain itself and take care of employees.

Increase your QR IQ

At a time when so many restaurants are short-staffed, it's especially important for your food safety practices to be infused in your operation's daily dialogue. Restaurant leadership should weave food safety into their communications – with their messages cascading to employees frequently and via a range of written and verbal communication channels. Managers should model the food safety practices they expect from their staff. Reminders of key safety practices should be posted around your facility – and be a regular topic in meetings and conversations. Consider how you can reinforce safety messages through staff contests, quizzes and shift checklists.



Dissect that data

You know there is power in the data you collect about your operation. In the coming months, expect to see developments in exactly how restaurant operators can slice and dice that data in order to draw clear conclusions about it (and then create more targeted, personalised marketing messages). On the Lunchbox platform, for one, digital customers are divided into active, regular and lost categories – and they receive different automated promotions designed to increase the frequency of their visits. After you collect data about your guests, how well does your technology help you connect the dots? It should help you convert semi-regular guests into loyal patrons and deliver increasingly customized offers to your best customers over time – ideally without much manual input from you.





Banh Mi Sandwich

Ingredients:

- 6– 4oz. Labriola Soft Pretzel Demi Hinge Sliced
- 2 lbs Lemongrass-Ginger marinated pork tenderloin
- 2 cups of pickled Daikon & Carrot matchsticks
- 1 cup of Sriracha Aioli
- 2 Fresno Peppers sliced thin, seeded
- 1 bunch of fresh Cilantro
- 1 bunch fresh Scallions sliced thin

Sriracha is here to stay



Some say sriracha has dethroned ketchup as America's favorite condiment. The Thai chili sauce started winning fans in the U.S. more than a decade ago and sriracha seasoning has since found its way into everything from cocktails to beef jerky to the menus of mainstream quick-service brands. If your guests are clamoring for sriracha, consider using it to add some warmth and zip to vinaigrettes, condiments, marinades, or as a seasoning on soups and snacks.

Instructions:

1. Heat cast iron pan on medium high heat
2. Sear pork tenderloin on all sides
3. Finish cooking in preheated oven at 375°
4. Remove pork from oven when internal temperature is 160-165° F
5. Allow tenderloin to rest for 15-20 min.
6. Slice pork and reserve
7. Spread Sriracha Aioli on insides of Demi roll
8. Layer in sliced pork generously
9. Add pickled Daikon and Carrots on top of pork
10. Garnish with sliced Fresno Peppers, scallions, and cilantro
11. Serve immediatel

Recipe and photo courtesy of J&J Snacks

Food Trends



Check the safety of your outdoor dining area

It looks like outdoor dining is here to stay for a while – particularly as many restaurants around the U.S. are closing or limiting their indoor seating due to the spread of the Delta variant. If you plan to serve guests outdoors in the months ahead, ensure the safety of your outdoor service capabilities. Have yours evolved past the temporary measures you may have had in place over the past year? Create permanent and well-stocked outdoor service stations to minimize your staff's trips around your facility. Check that footpaths are flat and clear of obstructions. Ensure that awnings and all covered outdoor spaces are structurally secure and don't pose safety risks.



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A time of transition

Consumers are expecting things to be a bit different as a result of the pandemic – and at a time when supplies continue to be short, labor is difficult to find and customer traffic is unreliable, restaurants can use this expectation to their advantage. Many restaurants already are: Take Michelin-rated Eleven Madison Park, which announced it would be reopening as an entirely plant-based restaurant after its closure during the pandemic. As you have managed your restaurant throughout the course of the pandemic, have you come to conclusions about major aspects of your business that need to change in order to preserve the longevity of your restaurant? Would you be better able to stabilize your menu by making it entirely plant-based? Have you always relied on a dine-in customer base but believe this can no longer be your main source (or even a small source) of sales? Do you think you should serve a different demographic of customers than you did before? Are you too reliant on labor shifts – and burdened by the need to provide higher wages and benefits? Now is a good time for reinvention. Identify your primary pain points when it comes to your supplies, staffing, marketing and day-to-day operations management. By changing things that may have needed changing for a long time, you can give yourself a new story to tell customers, refresh your brand and generate renewed interest in it as we emerge from the pandemic.



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